

protect the fundamental right to vote. The Constitution gives Congress the power to oversee Federal elections. That means that Congress has the authority to protect democracy and the right to vote, and we have a constitutional and moral obligation to do so. That was part of the oath I swore, to “support and defend the Constitution” and “bear true faith and allegiance to the same.”

Congress has a responsibility to act now to ensure that the right of every American to vote is never taken away. We must pass legislation to prevent partisan politicians from rejecting the will of the people and overturning election results. Because that effort here in Congress is being blocked by a minority, which is abusing its power, I believe the time has come to change the Senate rules to allow a straight up-or-down majority vote on this fundamental issue of democracy.

Our Founders understood that our democracy was a fragile thing that we would always have to fight to protect. Across every generation, Americans have signed up to serve not just to protect our physical security but to protect our freedom.

American soldiers, like my father, fought in World War II. They saved the world from Hitler, preserving freedom around the globe. My dad fought in the Battle of the Bulge. When I was growing up and we were having breakfast, Dad would sometimes look up at my brother, my sister, and me, and he would say, “So what are you going to do for freedom today?” Sounds like kind of a big question to ask a kid, but he was serious because every single American has a responsibility to help protect our democracy, including and perhaps especially U.S. Senators.

We must change the Senate rules to protect the right to vote because if we don’t, we face a very different kind of election day than the one we have now. If the partisans who are attacking our democracy have their way, our Tuesday election day in early November will be different. We will wake up, cast our vote, drop our kids at school, and go to work. We will tune back in at the end of the day to see the election results, only to learn that the vote tally is being ignored, that our votes don’t matter much. We will learn that our legislatures are going to throw out the results and pick their own winner. We will see an election day that is a charade just like in countries where democracy doesn’t exist.

Our democracy is too important to allow a minority of this body to let it slip away. We must pass legislation to protect American democracy. Our country depends on it.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate

proceed to the following nominations en bloc: 622, 629, 630, 595, 596, 607, 608, and all the nominations on the Secretary’s desk in the Army, Foreign Service, and Space Force; that the Senate vote on the nominations en bloc without intervening action or debate; that the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table with no intervening action or debate; that any statements related to the nominations be printed in the RECORD; and that the President be immediately notified of the Senate’s action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the en bloc nominations of Thomas Barrett, of Wisconsin, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg; Shannon Corless, of the District of Columbia, to be Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis, Department of the Treasury; Kurt D. DelBene, of Washington, to be an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs (Information and Technology); Lisa W. Wang, of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Commerce; Maria Louise Lago, of New York, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade; the following named officer for appointment in the United States Navy to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., section 601: To be Vice Admiral Rear Adm. Collin P. Green; the following named officer for appointment in the United States Navy to the grade indicated while assigned to a position of importance and responsibility under title 10, U.S.C., sections 154 and 601: To be Admiral Adm. Christopher W. Grady; PN1461 ARMY nomination of Todd E. Moszer, which was received by the Senate and appeared in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of December 7, 2021; PN726 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (35) beginning Arthur W. Brown, and ending Peter C. Trenchard, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of June 22, 2021; PN728—1 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (153) beginning Rahel Aboye, and ending Kyra Turner Zogbekor, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of June 22, 2021; PN1317 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (228) beginning Adam Jeffrey Abramson, and ending Jessica Torres Yurcheshen, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of October 27, 2021; PN1318 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (6) beginning Mario D. Ambrosino, and ending Cristobal Zepeda, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of October 27, 2021; PN1320 FOREIGN SERVICE nominations (53) beginning Nicholas R. Abbate, and ending Maria E. Snarski, which nominations were received by

the Senate and appeared in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of October 27, 2021; and PN1463 SPACE FORCE nominations (8) beginning MARC D. DANIELS, and ending JAY M. STEINGOLD, which nominations were received by the Senate and appeared in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD of December 7, 2021?

The nominations were confirmed en bloc.

#### LEGISLATIVE SESSION

##### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

##### VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, for the information of the Senate, while I was necessarily absent for the confirmation votes of Ramin Toloui and Rashad Hussain, I want the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD to reflect my support for their confirmations. Had I been present, I would have voted in the affirmative.

Ramin Toloui is nominated to be the Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs. He is the professor of the Practice for International Finance at Stanford University, and the Tad and Diane Taube Policy Fellow at the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research. His teaching and research focus on international economic policy, financial crises, and the economic impact of artificial intelligence. He began his career as a civil servant at the Department of the Treasury. His nomination was favorably reported by the Foreign Relations Committee, and he is superbly qualified to hold this position.

Rashad Hussain is nominated to be Ambassador at Large for Religious Freedom. He is a senior counsel at the Department of Justice’s National Security Division. He previously served as President Obama’s Special Envoy to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation—OIC—as U.S. Special Envoy for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, and as Deputy Associate White House Counsel. In his role as OIC Envoy, Professor Hussain helped develop U.S. policy and deepen and expand partnerships with Muslim-majority countries, civil society organizations, and the OIC, the world’s second largest multilateral organization after the UN. As Special Envoy for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, Professor Hussain led an interagency body that worked with international partners to amplify credible narratives in countering terrorist propaganda. Having been reported favorably by the Foreign Relations Committee, I have no doubt of his qualifications for this position.

# CELEBRATING ITALIANS IN VERMONT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, those who know me, and even those who don't, are well aware of the pride I have in my Italian heritage. My maternal grandparents emigrated from the Friuli region of Italy, coming to South Ryegate, VT, to work in the granite quarries. Since the 1880s, many Italians have followed this same immigration pattern, settling across Vermont, where the beautiful hills and lakes remind them of their ancestral home. Today, Vermont boasts a strong community of Italian Americans, many of whom, including me, are members of the Vermont Italian Cultural Association, VICA. Led by President Lisa DeNatale, the association preserves and promotes Italian culture in Vermont, hosting language and travel groups, presentations, movies, cooking classes, luncheons, and bocce socials. Last year, Marcelle and I were delighted to join VICA and Trattoria Delia for a virtual wine-tasting. Joining with dear friends online helped us, like so many Vermonters, get through the earliest and harder months of the pandemic.

It is nearly impossible to travel across our State without seeing the influence of the Italian-American community. In Northfield, the streets outside of La Panciata smell of Carrara, Italy, where founder Glenn Loati learned the ancient art of baking Latin leavened breads. In Burlington, Trattoria Delia serves traditional Neapolitan pizzas baked in an imported Acunto oven. And of course in Barre, where so many Italians immigrated, the Società di Mutuo Soccorso provides community support, and the Vermont Salumi and Alimentari Roscini Market keeps us fed with some of the best cured meats in the State.

Some Italian philosophies have also made their way to Vermont. The Slow Food movement, founded by Carlo Petrini in Turin, Italy, found a welcoming home in our State less than 10 years after its conception. The practices of growing and producing good, clean, and fair food certainly weren't new to Vermonters, but Slow Food Vermont has become an important part of our local food economy.

I am proud to be a member of VICA and so grateful for the rich culture that Italian Americans have fostered in Vermont. The Green Mountain appreciation for artisanal products created with craftsmanship and traditional methods will always remind me of my Italian ancestors. I look forward to being back in Vermont, breaking bread and sharing wine, with this incredible community.

"We the Italians" recently interviewed VICA President Lisa DeNatale. Her comments so resonated with me. I recognize many of the businesses, friends and communities she references. Even when far from Vermont and at work in Washington, these kinds of interviews take me home.

I ask unanimous consent that the recent interview with Lisa DeNatale be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[Dec. 7, 2021]

WE THE ITALIANS: INTERVIEW WITH LISA DENATALE (PRESIDENT OF THE VERMONT ITALIAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION)

If since the beginning of the pandemic I personally have not yet had the opportunity to physically travel back to visit any of the many friends of We the Italians scattered across the United States, thanks to our interviews I often have the chance to take a virtual trip and get to know the various Italian communities both in the most famous areas of America and in the lesser known ones here in Italy.

Vermont may be not that famous in Italy, but Italian emigration to the Green Mountain State was very important and I am pleased to thank and host Lisa DeNatale, President of the Vermont Italian Cultural Association and also Ambassador of We the Italians in Vermont. I'm hosting her on We the Italians, but by telling me about the history and present of Italy in Vermont, it's a bit like she's also hosting me in Burlington and Barre. Are you ready? Come with me

LISA, PLEASE TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT YOU AND YOUR ITALIAN HERITAGE

My grandparents, Maria Tripi and Salvatore DiNatale emigrated from Pietraperzia, Sicilia in 1910. They married and settled in Boston, eventually buying a home, and raising their six children in Everett, Massachusetts.

Giuseppe Salvatore DiNatale, my father, was born in 1924. He was deeply proud of his Sicilian heritage and often sang songs and occasionally spoke to his children in Italian (not dialect). If the truth be told, he mostly spoke in the imperative! "Vieni qui"; "lasciala!"; "mangia!"; "andiamo subito" are some of the phrases I recall.

I had a large extended family which gathered at my grandparent's home for Pasqua, Natale, Onomastici and almost any other occasion. I remember celebrating my father's Onomastico with zeppole in honor of San Giuseppe. Each celebration included more people than there were chairs, crowded around tables in my grandparent's home. As children we played bocce alongside the grape vines and pear trees in their yard and danced the tarantella.

From a young age I recall attending the Feast of Maria Santissima Della Cava, patroness of Pietraperzia, one of the many feasts celebrated in Boston's North End each summer. In 1967 my parents and grandparents traveled together to Sicily and Italy, reestablishing family connections and invigorating our ties to Sicily. Upon returning my father began a life-long focus on preparing authentic Italian foods such as risotto milanese, calamari, polenta, pesto and panettone, well before these gained popularity in the US.

In my twenties I began to visit Italy and have since traveled there dozens of times, including twice to Sicily. It may be surprising to hear that on my first trip to Sicily, I was struck by how many of my childhood friends surnames corresponded with places in Sicily such as Siracusa and Mondello, and how many more had relatives buried in the Cimitero di Pietraperzia. I understood then how much of my childhood was inextricably tied to Sicily.

I am currently pursuing my Italian citizenship and am awaiting my appointment at the Boston Consulate schedule for March 2022.

YOU ARE THE PRESIDENT OF THE VERMONT ITALIAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION. PLEASE TELL US ABOUT THE HISTORY AND THE ACTIVITIES OF THIS ASSOCIATION

The Vermont Italian Cultural Association was founded in 1983 by Italians and Italian Americans many of whom had relocated to Vermont in the late 70's. Dr. Ken Ciongoli, an Italian American born in Philadelphia and Dr. Mario Morselli, born in Bologna, were lecturing about Italy in Burlington, Vermont and attracted interest from the community and in particular from other Italians and Italian Americans in the area. Some of the early VICA members were new to Vermont and sought an Italian community in which to continue their family traditions and celebrate their Italian heritage. In time, a small group formed, drawn together by a mutual passion for preserving and sharing Italian culture. During the early years the group met in living rooms and later, in restaurants and community centers that could accommodate the growing numbers. Membership extended south to Barre and Rutland; communities steeped in Italian heritage. The growing community shared the bond of family and Italian traditions and preserved these for generations to follow.

VICA has for many years celebrated Epifania with a visit from La Befana and Carnevale which included a mask making activity. In addition, VICA has sponsored trips to Italy as well as opera excursions to Montreal, a short 90-minute drive from Burlington. Programs and activities have expanded over the years, ranging from lectures on art, travel and genealogy to film, cooking, dance, language groups and bocce tournaments. Monthly amici lunches bring together members for socializing, and Italian conversation groups have continued in classrooms, in coffee shops and on zoom.

More recently, VICA has turned to virtual events which have proven to be very popular. These include book readings hosted by Phoenix Books, a VICA partner, featuring Vermont authors Vincent Panella, Jay Parini and Charlie Nardozzi, along with travel author Carla Gambescia. A recent lecture on Slow Food with the Slow Food Vermont chapter attracted over 100 people and earlier this year VICA held two virtual presentations entitled In Pursuit of Italian Citizenship, attracting over 200 VICA and community members.

And because Vermont winters can be cold and snowy in December 2020, and almost bi-monthly since then, we've co-hosted virtual wine-tastings with VICA partner Trattoria Delia, showcasing Italian wines from every region. In celebration of Women's History Month in March we featured wines produced by women in Italy. Participants were treated to personal video messages sent from three producers: Cinzia Sommariva, Elisa Sesti and Giulia Negri. Each event includes a selection of hand-curated antipasti prepared locally. These events have proven to be enormously popular, engaging our members and successfully recruiting others to VICA. Upcoming events include virtual cooking classes, opera lectures and a trip to Puglia in October 2022.

Promoting knowledge and appreciation of Italian culture in our community is at the heart of the Vermont Italian Cultural Association's mission. Each year VICA awards small grants and scholarships to support projects and endeavors consistent with VICA's mission. The VICA Scholarship and Grants Fund encourages those who are seeking to broaden their knowledge of Italy, including the Italian American experience, the Italian experience, its language, arts, music, history, and culture to apply. Most recently (prior to covid) two scholarships were awarded. One went to a University of Vermont student who participated in an archaeological